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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/516,482	03/01/2000	Joseph M. DeSimone	5051-4601P	3128

20792 7590 12/23/2002

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EXAMINER

BISSETT, MELANIE D

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1711

DATE MAILED: 12/23/2002

18

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/516,482

Applicant(s)

DESIMONE ET AL.

Examiner

Melanie D. Bissett

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the corresponding address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 28 October 2002.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15, 23-38, 46 and 65-158 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☒ Claim(s) 73-122 and 149-158 is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15, 23-38, 46, 65-67, 69-71, 123-141 and 143-148 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 68, 72 and 142 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☒ The proposed drawing correction filed on 25 July 2002 is: a) ☒ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) _____.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. The request filed on 11/5/02 for Continued Examination under 37 CFR 1.114 based on parent Application No. 09/516,482 is acceptable and an RCE has been established. An action on the RCE follows. The rejections from the final rejection dated 5/17/02 have been maintained. New claims, which parallel or duplicate those previously rejected, have been included in the present rejections. Also, new claims, which parallel those previously allowed, have been included in the allowable subject matter. The objection to the specification has been withdrawn.

Drawings

2. The proposed drawing correction and/or the proposed substitute sheets of drawings, filed on 7/25/02 have been approved. A proper drawing correction or corrected drawings are required in reply to the Office action to avoid abandonment of the application. The correction to the drawings will not be held in abeyance.

Response to Amendment

3. It is noted that the marked-up copy of claim 146 does not match the clean copy of claim 146. It is the examiner's position to treat the claim according to the clean copy.

4. The amendment filed 7/25/02 is objected to under 35 U.S.C. 132 because it introduces new matter into the disclosure. 35 U.S.C. 132 states that no amendment shall introduce new matter into the disclosure of the invention. The added material which is not supported by the original disclosure is as follows:

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5. New claims 145 and 148 recite “a mixture of thermoplastic polymers consisting essentially of PVDF and PMMA”, where the specification does not provide support for a mixture *consisting essentially of* the two polymers. Although the specification demonstrates mixtures *consisting of* the specified polymers, no guidance as to what materials would be excluded from such a mixture *consisting essentially of* two polymers is provided. The specification offers description of other polymers to be added to the mixture, including other thermoplastic polymers (p. 6 lines 1-16), surfactants (p. 6-9), and modifiers (p. 10 lines 10-15). Also, other additives and solvents are noted as useful in the invention. Therefore, one of ordinary skill in the art would not know which added materials would be detrimental to the effects of the invention.

Applicant is required to cancel the new matter in the reply to this Office Action.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

6. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

7. Claims 1-2, 4-15, 23, 65-66, 123-124, 126-140, 143-145 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humphrey, Jr. et al.

8. From a prior Office action:

Humphrey discloses an electrode comprising a porous or foamed polyvinylidene fluoride (col. 4 lines 41-57) stabilized to inhibit crystallization and improve conductivity (col. 7 lines 19-23 and 46-52). Thus, the stabilized PVDF is less crystalline than the initial PVDF. Humphrey teaches the addition of PMMA for increasing adhesion of PVDF to metallic conductors (col. 5 lines 44-49), thus forming a PVDF/PMMA blend. PVDF has been shown as a semi-crystalline polymer by the need for amorphous stabilization, and PMMA is a known amorphous polymer. Supercritical carbon dioxide is preferred as a blowing agent (col. 9 lines 21-36) for forming open cell foams, where the blowing agent is incorporated into the polymer and allowed to expand. This expansion results from

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a thermodynamic instability; because the carbon dioxide is incorporated under supercritical conditions, one skilled in the art would clearly envision the expansion resulting from a change in pressure and temperature of the mixture. Also, because the foams contain open cells, one skilled in the art would clearly envision the carbon dioxide venting from the created pores or cells, thus separating from the mixture.

However, the reference does not exemplify making porous foamed materials having a plurality of distinct voids. The reference does suggest that closed-cell porous foams and foams having both open and closed cells may be formed by the invention (col. 4 lines 53-57), noting that the mobility of electrolyte is increased with an open structure. One skilled in the art would recognize that including amounts of closed cells in the foams would provide a means for controlling the mobility of electrolyte. It is thus the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to provide closed cells within the porous structure to control the mobility of the electrolyte and thus control the conductivity of the system.

Humphrey teaches the inhibited crystallization of the PVDF polymers but does not mention a mixture of stabilized PVDF and PMMA as an amorphous blend. Humphrey indicates the conductivity as inversely related to the crystallinity of the PVDF (col. 7 lines 46-52). Therefore, it is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to form a polymer blend having any amount of crystallinity to produce a foam with the desired conductivity. Since Humphrey indicates a desire to improve conductivity, it would have been prima facie obvious to form an amorphous blend to increase conductivity.

Humphrey teaches the addition of plasticizers and co-solvents in the invention (col. 8 lines 7-17), modifiers conventionally used to aid in processing by reducing viscosity and improving solubility, respectively. However, the reference does not mention the combination of the additives with the blowing agent. Combining the additives with the blowing agent would prevent the need to combine the additives individually. Thus, it is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to add a co-solvent or plasticizer to the blowing agent composition in Humphrey's invention with the expectancy of forming a polymer foam with minimal additions.

9. Note also that Humphrey teaches cell diameters of 0.01-100 μm , particularly 0.1-10 μm , and especially 0.1-1.5 μm (col. 4 lines 58-65). It is the examiner's position that Humphrey suggests mixtures consisting essentially of PVDF and PMMA, since the present specification gives no guidance as to what materials would be excluded.

10. Claims 24-28, 30-38, 46, 69-70, 146-148 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humphrey, Jr. et al. in view of Pecsok.

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11. From a prior Office action:

Humphrey applies as above, lacking express mention of an extrusion process used for forming PVDF foams. Humphrey discloses a method of heating the polymer, incorporating supercritical carbon dioxide, and expanding the article. Pecsok discloses an extrusion method for PVDF polymers, where PVDF and additives are introduced into a powder blender, melt blended in a twin screw extruder, and extruded onto a wire. Thus, the mixing of the thermoplastics occurs in a mixing section of an extruder, and the components are melt blended. Because of the conventionality of the melt extrusion method, it is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to mix the components of Humphrey's invention in the melt in a mixing section of an extruder with the expectancy of beneficial results.

12. Claims 3 and 125 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humphrey, Jr. et al. in view of Boutillier et al.

13. From a prior Office action:

Humphrey applies as above, teaching the use of supercritical carbon dioxide but not liquid carbon dioxide as a blowing agent. Boutillier teaches the conventionality of liquid carbon dioxide as a foaming agent (col. 8 lines 41-51) for vinyl monomers such as vinylidene fluoride (col. 7 lines 55-68). It is thought that liquid carbon dioxide would be more cost effective than supercritical carbon dioxide, since liquid carbon dioxide does not require temperature control and pressurization to the extent that supercritical carbon dioxide requires. It is therefore the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to use liquid carbon dioxide as a blowing agent in Humphrey's invention to save energy required to keep carbon dioxide in a supercritical state.

14. Claim 29 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humphrey, Jr. et al. in view of Pecsok as applied to claims 24-28, 30-38, and 46 above, and further in view of Boutillier et al.

15. From a prior Office action:

Humphrey and Pecsok apply as above for the extrusion process, failing to mention the use of liquid carbon dioxide as a blowing agent. The reference van Cleeff applies as above. For the same reasons as stated above, it is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to use liquid carbon dioxide as a blowing agent in the composition of Humphrey's invention in an extrusion process with the expectancy of beneficial results. The use of liquid carbon dioxide would serve to save energy required to keep carbon dioxide in a supercritical state.

16. Claims 67, 71, and 141 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Humphrey, Jr. et al. in view of Minakata et al.

17. From a prior Office action:

Humphrey, Jr. et al. applies as above, noting the use of physical blowing agents such as carbon dioxide or comparable blowing agents but failing to mention organic blowing agents (col. 9 lines 21-36). Minikata discloses an electrochemical device using a closed-cell polymer foam, suggesting the use of foamed vinylidene fluoride polymer (col. 14 lines 29-65). Halogen compounds, hydrocarbons, carbon dioxide, and toluene are mentioned as useful and equivalent physical blowing agents, where blowing agent 134a (1,1,1,2-fluoroethane) is specified (col. 15 lines 3-13). It is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to choose an equivalent physical blowing agent, such as those taught in Minikata, for use in Humphrey's invention in the expectancy of forming equally improved electrochemical cells.

Double Patenting

18. Applicant is advised that should claims 1-15, 23, and 65-68 be found allowable, claims 123-142 will be objected to under 37 CFR 1.75 as being a substantial duplicate thereof. When two claims in an application are duplicates or else are so close in content that they both cover the same thing, despite a slight difference in wording, it is proper after allowing one claim to object to the other as being a substantial duplicate of the allowed claim. See MPEP § 706.03(k).

Allowable Subject Matter

19. Claims 73-122 and 149-158 are allowed.

20. Claims 68, 72, and 142 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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21. The closest prior art, Humphrey, Jr. et al., teaches an electrode comprising a porous or foamed polyvinylidene fluoride stabilized to inhibit crystallization and improve conductivity. Thus, the stabilized PVDF is less crystalline than the initial PVDF. However, the reference does not teach the use of chemical blowing agents in the invention, teaching instead that such blowing agents are undesired. Also, the reference does not teach the applicant's claimed surfactant use in the invention. Therefore, it is the examiner's position that the applicant's claimed chemical blowing agents and surfactants, when used in the applicant's claimed methods, provide a novel and unobvious step over the prior art.

Response to Arguments

22. In response to the applicant's argument that the reference does not have particular evidence showing that porous foams having distinct voids are obvious over the invention, it is noted that the reference specifically suggests that porous structures having both open and closed cells can be formed in the invention. The reference also points to the fact that electrolyte conductivity occurs in the open regions. One skilled in the art would recognize from this teaching that electrolyte conductivity could be controlled by the formation of open and closed cells.

23. Although the applicants argue that the reference does not teach how to make closed-cell foams of the invention, it is the examiner's position that one of ordinary skill in the art would know to alter foaming conditions such as amount of blowing agent to achieve materials having closed cells.

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24. Regarding the applicant's argument that Humphrey places lower limits on the amount of crystallinity employed, it is first noted that the passage suggests the reduction of crystallinity in the polymer but does not teach a specific lower limit of crystallinity.

The passage describes reducing the crystallinity of the semi-crystalline component but not the blend. The requirement for crystallinity in the blend to improve mechanical properties cannot be assumed from the reference. The homogeneous blending of the two materials would inherently decrease crystallinity of the independent materials because of the decreased order in the structures. Thus, the blend would have a different, more amorphous, morphology than the individual semi-crystalline material.

25. It is also noted that the blend of a semi-crystalline with an amorphous material would yield a material having at least some amorphous character while also having some crystalline character derived from the semi-crystalline polymer. The claim and specification do not provide further definition or limitation to the term "amorphous blend"; thus, since the reference teaches reducing crystallinity of the semi-crystalline polymer, it is the examiner's position that it would have been prima facie obvious to reduce crystallinity to improve conductivity.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Melanie D. Bissett whose telephone number is (703) 308-6539. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8-4:30.


If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, James Seidleck can be reached on (703) 308-2462. The fax phone

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numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are (703) 872-9310 for regular communications and (703) 872-9311 for After Final communications.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 308-0661.

mdb
December 17, 2002



James J. Seidleck
Supervisory Patent Examiner
Technology Center 1700